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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

FROM US MISSION TO UNESCO

E.O. 12958: NONE

TAGS: [KPAO](#) [ECPS](#) [ETRD](#) [ECON](#) [EINT](#) [ETTC](#) [UNESCO](#)

SUBJECT: USUNESCO: POST-WSIS READOUT

REF: Paris 7472 and 7677

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Mission met with Elizabeth Longworth, Head of the Information Society Division of the UNESCO Communication and Information Sector on 11/23/05 and discussed WSIS follow up at UNESCO, UNESCO views on how Internet Governance was handled at WSIS, and the U.S. Library of Congress plans to work with Google to develop a digital library. Longworth also raised UNESCO's discomfort with the media freedom and human rights in Tunisia, whether MIT's 100 USD laptop would impact development, and UNESCO public relations successes at WSIS. END SUMMARY.

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WSIS Follow Up at UNESCO  
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2. (SBU) Longworth described UNESCO's post WSIS role as a "mixed bag." UNESCO had wanted a lead role in post WSIS implementation. There were lots of different pieces to put together now, she stated. She added that it would take time to sort out which WSIS stakeholders within the UN family wanted to be involved in post-WSIS implementation and which ones did not. The main problem for UNESCO, she said, was now carrying out its facilitative work to implement WSIS decisions without resource implications. All in all, she acknowledged that the "right compromise" was struck at WSIS. UNESCO would lead on WSIS action lines on media and culture, but share all other action lines with various actors in the UN system.

3. (SBU) Longworth discussed plans to link WSIS goals with building "knowledge economies" that she and the head of the communication and information sector are devising in order to move beyond WSIS and the "knowledge society" to build "knowledge economies" modeled on Finnish, Irish, New Zealand, Australian, U.S. and U.K. efforts to create a more educated workforce. The goal is to encourage UNESCO to think about how to encourage developing countries to build cognitive skills in their workforce. Longworth has invited Amciet Louis Allardo to UNESCO for a workshop on this topic scheduled for January.

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Internet Governance:  
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4. (SBU) Longworth stated that she was "delighted" that the Internet Governance issue was resolved. She noted that it was a "must" to set up a forum to avoid alienating countries from the current arrangement. She observed that the final compromise document was well drafted, subtle, and full of acknowledgements that made various member states feel included. At the same time, she said she was equally delighted that the Internet governance negotiations went no further. No one in the UNESCO Communication and Information sector, she confided, wanted the Internet in the hands of the UN. (COMMENT: Assistant Secretary General for Communication and Information, Abdul Waheed Khan (an Indian national and Longworth's boss) was reportedly under extreme pressure from the Government of India to change his position on this issue but appears to have held firm. END COMMENT.)

5. (SBU) Longworth divulged that she had moved to add the term "avoid fragmentation" to all UNESCO speeches and interventions on the subject of Internet governance leading up to WSIS because she wanted to highlight the point that if duplicate Internets were created, the value of the Internet would be lost. She stated that "if the U.S. has not changed its position, certain countries would have been ready to start their own Internets the day after WSIS concluded." Maybe, she speculated, the market would have soon corrected such moves as Internet users all gravitated to one net in particular, but nonetheless, she added, it would have been a retrograde step.

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LOC Digital Library Plans:  
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16. (SBU) We provided Longworth with a copy of the 11/22 Washington Post article on this topic, which she had already seen. We clarified that LOC's James Billington has gotten ahead of the process by engaging the press and we affirmed that the project was still in very early stages - eventually, the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO would be beginning to brainstorm ways in which to approach UNESCO about possible engagement. Then, it would approach UNESCO. Longworth understood that there was no action needed from her end, praised the project as "great news" and something her office would be very interested in getting involved with, but noted that she would be concerned if access were to be sold to the items placed on the Internet through the program. She asked us to convey to Washington that UNESCO had not been in contact with the LOC on this issue, as the article implied there was a connection.

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Tunisia and Human Rights:  
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17. (SBU) Longworth noted that UNESCO was "exceedingly uncomfortable" with the location of WSIS Phase 2 in Tunisia and the Government of Tunisia's (GOT) behavior toward journalists and NGOs. An unhappy side effect of this, she observed, was to move the media spotlight from the good work being done at WSIS to the human rights abuses of the Tunisian government. The GOT, Longworth stated, had missed an opportunity to show progress.

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100 USD Laptop:  
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18. (SBU) Longworth said the mood at UNESCO on prospects for the new MIT-created 100 USD laptop designed to help populations in developing countries to access ICTs, was "cynical", but acknowledged that one has to start somewhere. If the invention of this laptop, which was still not fully realized, eventually shook the market up and got people thinking about what a developing nation's environment demands from ICTs, she said, then it was a step in the right direction.

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UNESCO Visibility at WSIS:  
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19. (SBU) We asked Longworth what the biggest success of WSIS was for UNESCO. She stated that UNESCO achieved great visibility through its exhibit stand and that she received formal approaches from Sun Microsystems and Cisco on future ICT partnerships. She is also pursuing leads with the Canadians, the World Bank, the UN Food and Agriculture Office and several African governments. UNESCO delegates were overbooked for speaking engagements and "doing a lot of business" at the conference, she enthused. The trick now was to keep this momentum and communication going, she said.

110. (SBU) Longworth stated that a UNESCO workshop on ICTs for the Disabled had been a success, despite unfortunate logistical problems for attendees that, she suggested, caused some embarrassment for UNESCO. (The venue was not disability friendly.) While there were no specific member states or actors taking an active role on the issue right now, UNESCO has shone a spotlight on the issue and encouraged industry to anticipate the needs of the disabled, even if only as a market. She noted that the topic was of high personal interest to the Assistant Secretary General.

111. (SBU) COMMENT: We are pleased that UNESCO agrees with us that there should only be one Internet and that the compromise reached at WSIS is the best way to ensure this. At the same time, we note with concern the resonance at UNESCO of arguments for an increased international role on Internet governance. UNESCO's muted reaction to its more limited role in WSIS implementation is an indication of USG success at WSIS in ensuring that no one UN agency had a leading role.  
END COMMENT.